

**STATEMENT OF
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**Concerning
Eco-Terrorism and Lawlessness on National Forests**

**Before the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS AND FOREST HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

My name is Bill Wasley, and I am the Director of the Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) program. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss eco-terrorism acts on Forest Service facilities and how the Agency is addressing employee safety.

The Forest Service manages approximately 192 million acres of land in the United States. Protecting people and natural resources is part of our mission. This mission has become more difficult over the years as crimes occurring on national forests and to federal property have increased, especially criminal acts against research projects and government facilities. LEI is responsible for protecting and serving the public and agency employees; protecting natural resources and other property under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service; and cooperating with other law enforcement agencies.

Escalation of Incidents

Over the past 10 years, destructive civil disobedience and destructive criminal acts have increased, damaging resources and placing people in harm's way. Destructive criminal acts have primarily been related to protests against commercial logging activity on National Forest System (NFS) lands. These acts have included the illegal occupation of NFS lands and roads that place protestors at great risk; spiking trees designated for cutting; damaging or destroying natural resources, public roads, and facilities; damaging private property; and threatening and interfering with timber sale purchasers and timber operators. Since 1998, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) has claimed responsibility for at least five such acts to Forest Service resources, facilities, or vehicles.

Forest Service research programs have also been the targets of recent criminal acts. The Agency has an extensive research and development program that conducts basic and applied research on an array of subjects that complement the diverse mission of the Agency, including research on biological pathogens or forest genetics. In FY 2000, two acts of vandalism resulted in damages to the Forest Service Research facilities in Minnesota and Wisconsin, estimated at over \$1.3 million. Over 850 pine and broadleaf trees, and saplings from "superior" tree stock and cross-pollination research were cut down, ring-barked and trampled. ELF claimed responsibility for this act. In November of 2001, two explosive arson devices were planted near university and Forest Service research buildings at Michigan Technical University, but fortunately were located by security personnel prior to detonation. No one has yet been charged with this crime.

Prevention is critical to the Agency's action plan against destructive criminal acts. Currently, the Forest Service is conducting facility security assessments to identify those facilities that are vulnerable. These assessments will address employee, facility, asset, transportation, special use permitting, and resource protection concerns.

Safety in the Workplace

Since the mid 1990's, the number of threats and attacks on Forest Service employees have increased. Examples of these attacks include the bombing of an employee's residence and the complete destruction by arson of two Forest Service offices. These attacks have raised fears and concern among Agency employees for their personal safety. The Agency is addressing these concerns by securing government facilities; producing and distributing safety pamphlets, brochures, and videos; holding safety meetings; providing information to employees on steps that are being implemented to improve employee security; and providing violence awareness training. The Forest Service has an agreement with the Office of Inspector General (OIG) regarding investigations dealing with employee safety. The safety of Agency employees and the public on Forest Service lands is the top priority for the Forest Service.

Efforts to Ensure Coordinated Security

In cases of domestic terrorism the FBI has primary jurisdiction. LEI assist the FBI by serving on the joint task force investigating domestic terrorism acts.

Agency law enforcement officers and criminal investigators coordinate closely with line and staff officers to provide and implement security procedures for Forest Service facilities, resources,

employees, and the public. Security measures undertaken by LEI include: conducting threat assessments; providing personnel and facility security details during protests or high risk events, providing first responders to incidents; responding to protest and civil disobedience activities; investigating criminal acts; conducting search and rescues; responding to shooting incidents and drug and alcohol possession and use problems; and responding and investigating all reported instances of intimidation, threat, or assault against agency employees.

In investigating criminal acts, LEI has developed many cooperative agreements with other Federal, State, and local agencies for performance of routine law enforcement patrols, drug enforcement, timber theft investigations, and coordination of other enforcement activities. LEI participate in many task forces, particularly the FBI's counterterrorism taskforce mentioned above and the Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program.

Conclusion

The Forest Service is committed to work with the FBI to combat acts of domestic terrorism. We also are committed to ensuring safety and security of the public and our employees. The job is immense, but we will continue to work at providing these services and expend resources consistent with this priority.

This concludes my statement, I would be happy to answer any questions you or Members of the Subcommittee might have.